position in exports of leather goods through contract upgradations of technologies/skills through joint ventures; and

(d) what are the Ninth Plan perceptions for leather industry and steps taken/proposed to modernise and expand the production capacity of variety of material back by latest designs to capture world market?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHAN HEGDE) (a) It has been estimated that Leather sector's achevement of exports during 1997-98 is US $ 1461 M, which is 82.08% of the Target set for the industry i.e., US$ 1780 M.

(b) Foreign investments are encouraged for constant upgradation of technologies/skills in the leather sector. Foreign investments to the tune of Rs. 138.92 cr. have been approved by Government in the past three years. Italian assistance to the tune of Rs. 30 cr. has been made available for modernisation of the leather sector through National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC). This assistance has a special focus on improving the techniques and quality of output in the tanning sector.

(c) and (d) Many Expert Committees including the Ninth Plan Working Group, have emphasised the need for the Modernisation of the Leather Industry for quality enhancement and quantitative improvement in production capacity to enable cost-competitiveness in the international market. Government has given special attention to the leather sector at various levels with a view to increasing export. Inherent strengths of the Indian Leather Industry, especially in the tanning sector, have been taken into account, to formulate suitable strategies and increase India's share in the global market. Concerted efforts are afoot to achieve this goal. Government of India has launched a UNDP assisted National Leather Development Programme (NLDP) and a Leather Technology Mission (LTM) which are under implementation. These programmes are enabling an integrated approach to achieve higher productivity, make available high quality leather, encourage product differentiation and thereby catalyse the rapid growth and diversification of the Industry. India has targeted an export quantum of US$ 4.5 billion for the leather sector by the year 2001-2002.

Removal of quantitative restriction

442. *SHRI SOLIPETA RAMA CHANDRA REDDY:*
DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the submission made by India at the World Trade Organisation Panel looking into the dispute with United States over the removal of quantitative restrictions on imports by India; and

(b) the details of plan in this regard to remove import restrictions by April, 2003?

THE MINISTER OF COMMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHAN HEGDE) (a) and (b) Consequent upon the first written submission made by the United States on 31st March, 1998 to the dispute settlement panel of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in connection with India's dispute on quantitative restrictions on imports maintained for balance of payments purposes India made its counter submission to the panel on 1st May, 1998.

Broadly, India has submitted to the panel that:

(i) India's time-schedule for the removal of its import restrictions over six years, in three consecutive phases of 3 years, 2 years, and one year, starting 1st April, 1997, is consistent with Article XVIII: II of the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade (GATT) 1994;

(ii) India's import restrictions satisfy the requirements of Article XVIII: B of the GATT 1994;

(iii) The United States, and not India, must assert and demonstrate that India's time schedules are inconsistent with India's obligations under Article XVIII: II of the GATT 1994;

(iv) The Committee on Balance-of-Payments Restrictions and the General Council of the WTO have the exclusive authority, and not a dispute settlement panel, to determine whether a time-schedule for the removal of import restrictions is consistent with Article XVIII: II of the GATT 1994; and

(v) The views of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the issues raised in the dispute are not dispositive.

Accordingly, India has requested the Panel to reject the United States' complaint.

Since the panel proceeding has not yet concluded, no plan in this regard to remove import restrictions arises from the dispute with the United States.

अनाजों का कृषिगत उत्पादन

443. **श्री बरजिन्दर सिंह:**
श्री बलवन्त सिंह रामूवालिया:

क्या वाणिज्य मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या सरकार ने देश से कृषि उत्पादों के निर्यात के संबंध में नीति घोषित करने से पूर्व विश्व के अन्य कृषि आधारित देशों की कृषि उत्पादन दर से भारत की कृषि उत्पादन दर की तुलना की थी;

(ख) यदि हां, तो उन देशों के नाम क्या-क्या है जो कृषि उत्पादों का आयात एवं निर्यात करते है और उनके द्वारा किन-किन उत्पादों का आयात एवं निर्यात किया जाता है तथा उन उत्पादों के नाम क्या-क्या हैं जिनकी प्रत्येक देश में अधिकतम उत्पादन दर है और ऐसी दर क्या-क्या है; और

(ग) भारत में गेहूं, चावल, दलहन, तिलहन, कपास की अधिकतम एवं न्यूनतम उत्पादन दर क्या-क्या है?

वाणिज्य मंत्री (श्री राम कृष्ण हेगड़े) : (क) कृषिजन्य उत्पादों के निर्यात की अनुपूर्ति देने में सरकार की नीति मुख्य रूप से भारत की खाद्य सुरक्षा खेती की आय को अधिकतम करने तथा विदेशी मुद्रा अर्जित करने की चिन्ताओं द्वारा नियन्त्रित होती है।

(ख) सरकार इस सूचना को संकलित नहीं करती है क्योंकि यह सूचना सदस्य देशों द्वारा खाद्य एवं कृषि संगठन को सप्लाई की जाती है, जो कि उसे संकलित एवं प्रकाशित करता है।

(ग) उपज कि. ग्रा. प्रति हैक्टेयर (मुख्य राज्यों में)

वर्ष 1996-97

वस्तु	उच्चतम उपज/राज्य	न्यूनतम उपज/राज्य
गेहूं	4090/पंजाब	1104/हिमाचल प्रदेश
चावल	3397/पंजाब	981/उड़ीसा
दाल	924/उत्तर प्रदेश	342/उड़ीसा
तिलहन (9 तिलहन)	1481/हरियाणा	422/उड़ीसा
रूई	605/मध्य प्रदेश	182/महाराष्ट्र

स्रोत: आर्थिक और सांख्यिकी निदेशालय, कृषि मंत्रालय

Amendment to Patent Law

444. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention have been drawn to a news-item published in the Hindustan Times dated 23rd March, 1998 urging Government not to buckle under pressure to amend its patent regime and the policy on imposing quantitative restrictions on imports; and

(b) if so, the steps Government have taken so far to challenge the WTO ruling against India in the patent case?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHAN HEGDE) (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) India had challenged the findings dated 5th September, 1997 of the WTO panel on India - Patent Protection for pharmaceutical and Agricultural chemical products before the Appellate Body of WTO. Action is now being taken based on the Report of the Appellate Body dated 19th December, 1997 and discussions in the Dispute Settlement Body of the WTO.

Impact of decrease in price of rubber

445. SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the price of rubber is very low and it affected the rubber growers very badly and the Kerala economy;

(b) if so, what steps have been taken to protect the farmers;

(c) whether the STC is not purchasing the rubber; and

(d) if so, the reasons for stopping the purchase of rubber?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHAN HEGDE) (a) to (c) In order to arrest the declining rubber prices and to provide a remunerative price to the rubber growers, Government had instituted a market intervention operation through STC for procurement of 10000 MT of Natural Rubber on Government Account in 1997. STC has purchased 9596 MTs of Natural Rubber as per this direction. With the further decline in prices on Government has this month ordered